



SOUTHERN NEVADA
WATER AUTHORITY

Smart Start: A Win-Win Partnership that Extends Resources and Reduces Barriers to Program Participation

Southern Nevada Water Authority Conservation Division

1 Abstract

The Water Smart Landscapes (WSL) Program helps property owners convert turf grass to desert landscaping by offering a \$1.50 per square foot rebate for each square foot of turf removed.

Development of the Southern Nevada Water Authority's Smart Start program began in 2004 in response to overwhelming single-family residential customer demand for the WSL rebate program. The Smart Start program was devised as a tool for approved landscape contractors to perform the requisite pre-conversion landscape site inspection on behalf of SNWA staff, thus expediting a participant's entry into the WSL program.

2 Background

- Overwhelming single-family residential customer demand for the Water Smart Landscapes Program in early 2004 caused delays for approval of up to 8 weeks
- The required pre-conversion approval was identified as the most logical part of the Water Smart Landscapes program process to streamline for several reasons:
 - Identified by customers as the most frustrating area for delay
 - Simplest field process
- In order to expedite customer enrollment into the program, SNWA Conservation partnered with Water Smart Contractors
- The partnership enabled approved contractors to provide necessary program paperwork to the customers and submit digital photos of the proposed conversion areas to SNWA staff for review and approval
- The goal of the Smart Start program was to enable customers to gain approval for participation within five days or less

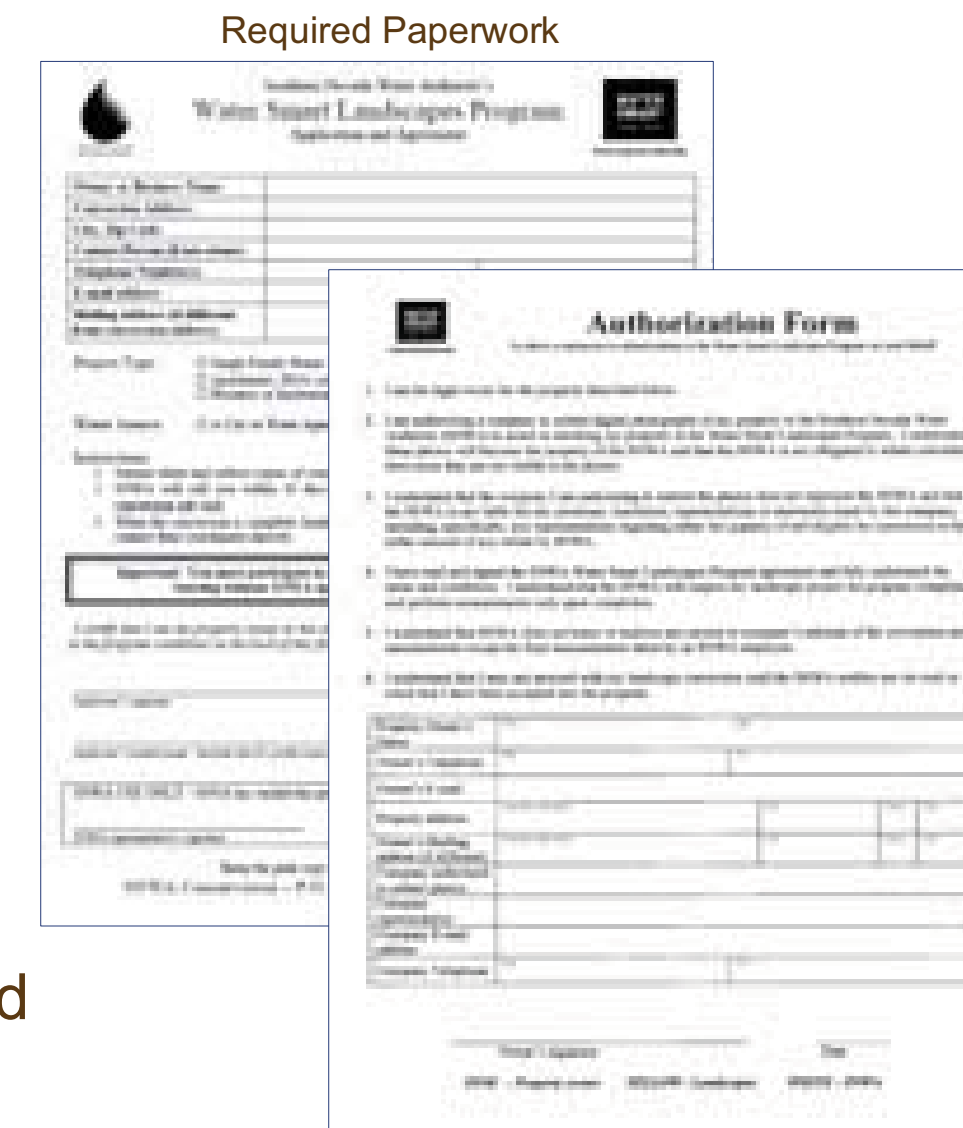
3 Landscape Contractor Requirements

- Successful completion of the Water Smart Contractor certification is necessary
- Additional, brief training session provided to interested Water Smart Contractors for Smart Start program
- Contractors must have email, internet and ability to take digital photos
- Contractors must not represent themselves as employees or agents of the Southern Nevada Water Authority

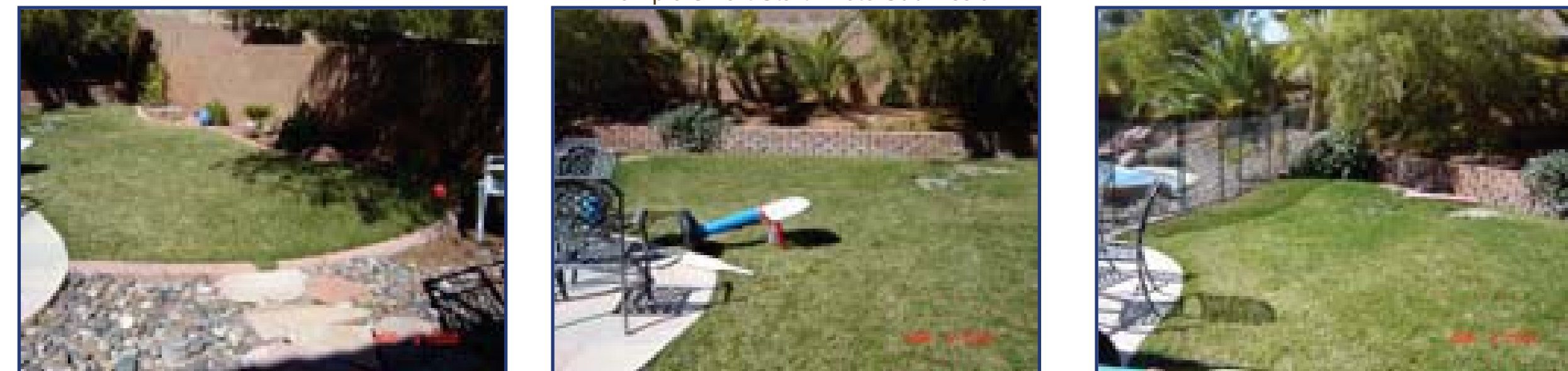


4 Process

- Contractor provides packet to customer containing:
 - Instruction Letter
 - Owner's authorization of agent form
 - Water Smart Landscapes program application
- Contractor electronic submittal:
 - SNWA.com web application to submit digital photos and property information
 - Notifications sent via email to both contractor and customer when information is received

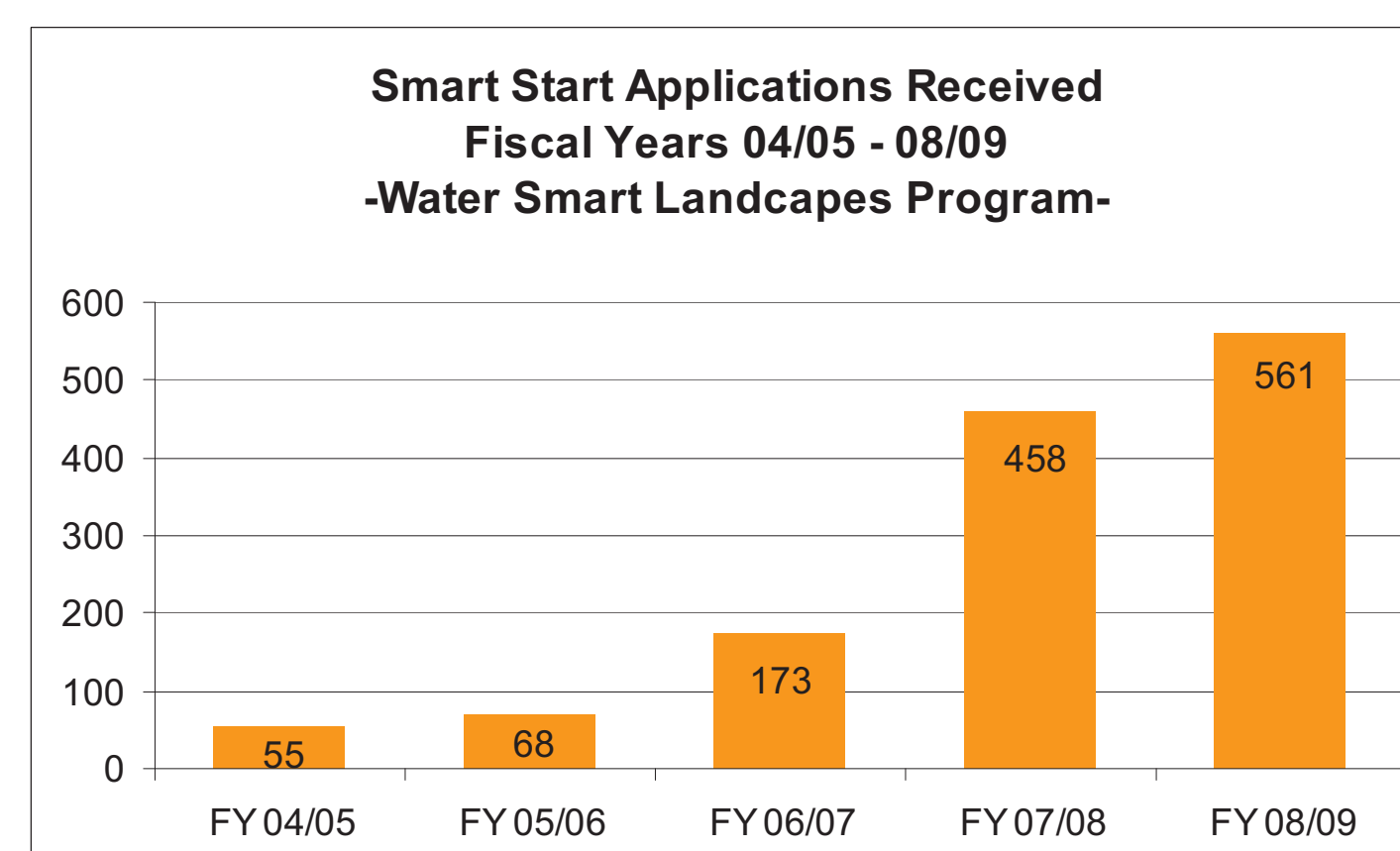


Example Smart Start Photo Submission



- SNWA Conservation Programs Coordinator reviews information:
 - Listed owner validated against Clark County Assessor
 - Completed paperwork
 - Photos that capture the entire proposed landscape conversion area and that match Clark County Assessor aerial images
- Email notification to property owner and landscape contractor:
 - Approval to proceed with turf conversion project, or
 - Denial for participation, including a description of basis for rejection
- Upon completion of the project, property owner calls SNWA to schedule the post-conversion site inspection
- SNWA conducts post-conversion site inspection and program completion using standard procedure

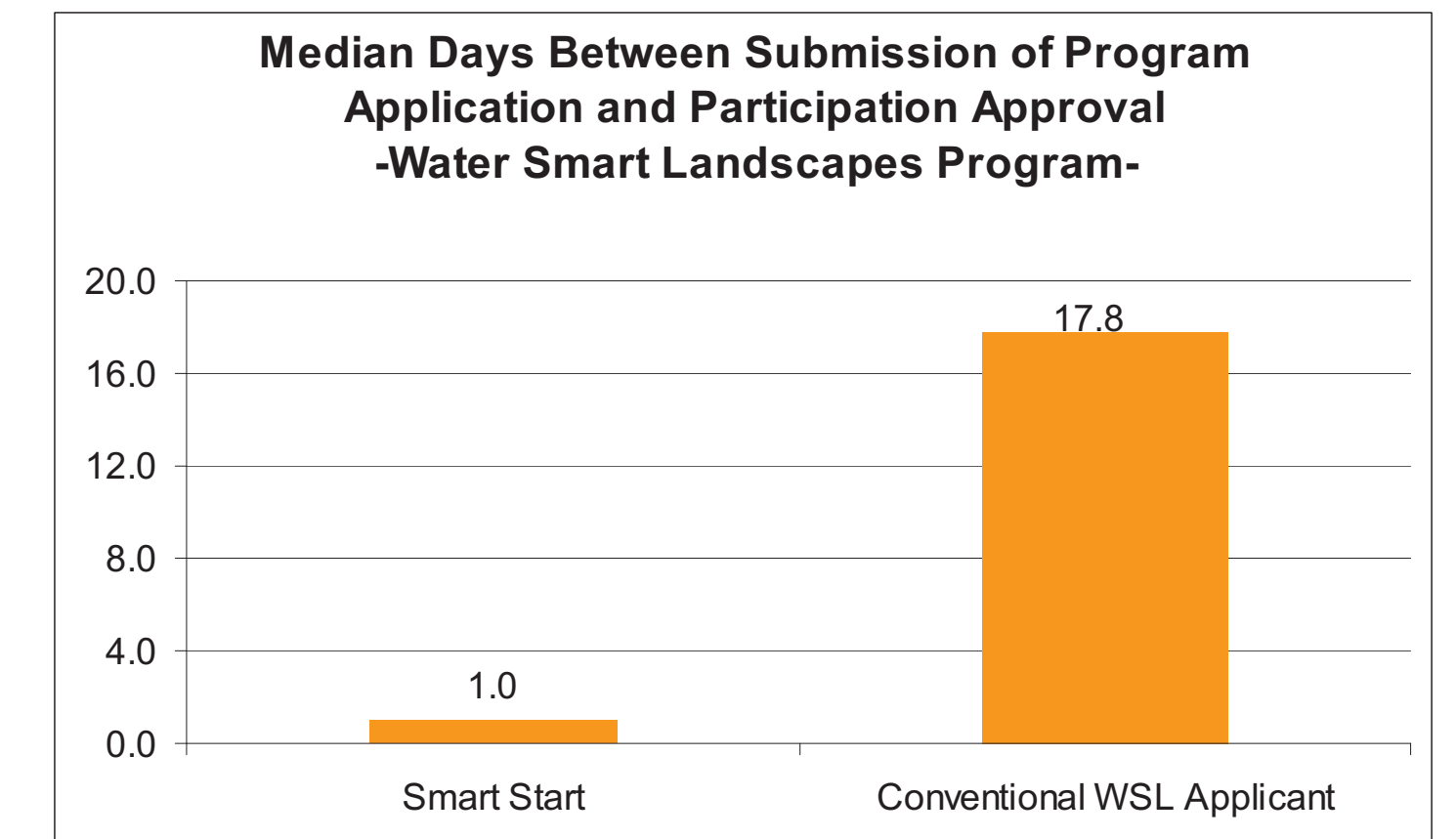
5 Program Statistics



- Currently, 49 out of 88 total Water Smart Contractors participate in the Smart Start program
- Smart Start applications have increased exponentially since 2004
 - Primarily due to an increase in participation by Water Smart Contractors
- Smart Start participants have a much higher rate of program completion than conventional WSL participants

6 Benefits

- Extends resources
 - Reduces staff time necessary for pre-conversion processes
- Electronic submittal of photos and property information
 - Allows for timely approvals
 - Creates consistency
- Expedited process for customers to enroll in the WSL program
 - Increases customer satisfaction
- Marketing tool for landscape contractors enrolled in the Smart Start program
- Industry collaboration and partnership
 - Creates "buy-in" to SNWA's conservation goals by landscape professionals



7 Challenges & Lessons

- Initial Smart Start training is often the only face-to-face interaction with the landscape contractor. Training must be thorough yet succinct.
- Photographs assist SNWA staff with determining eligibility and conversion size. Inadequate or poor quality photos negatively affect the efficiency of the process
- Smart Start contractors must ensure that all landscapes installed meet the minimum requirements for the WSL program
- Quality assurance standards for photos provided by landscape contractors will assist in eliminating instances of fraud
- Changes to the WSL program must be effectively communicated to Smart Start contractors to ensure successful completion of landscape conversions

Smart Start Photo Altered with Photoshop by Contractor



About the Author

Hillery Leslie is the Conservation Programs Coordinator working with single-family residential homeowners in the Southern Nevada Water Authority's Conservation Division. She is a Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor, Conservation Practitioner, and Certified Site Water Planner. She holds a Bachelor of Science from Auburn University and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Nevada – Las Vegas.